



Germany: Facts & Figures January 2006

A monthly overview of current opinion data and statistical information in the Federal Republic of Germany

Federal Politics

If Bundestag elections were held on January 29th, the CDU/CSU would receive 41% of the vote, the SPD 33%, the Green Party 8%, the FDP 8%, the PDS (with WASG) 8%, and all other parties combined 3%. (Forsch'gr. Wahlen, 01/27/06)

In an opinion poll among 796 business executives, Angela Merkel received a top grade with 2.1 on a scale ranging from one (very good) to five (very bad). This is the best grade a politician has ever received in the seven-year history of the poll. The grand coalition also got a good rating with 2.6. (Handelsblatt. 02/01/06)

Economy

The unemployment rate jumped to 12.1% in January. The number of people out of work rose to just over five million from the 4.6 million reported in December, when the rate was 11.1%. (Agentur fuer Arbeit. Major papers, 02/01/06)

The ifo-business sentiment index rose sharply to 102 (December: 99.7) in January, hitting a five-year high. The 7,000 companies, which were interviewed, consider their projections for the coming months to be as good as they were eleven years ago. (ifo. Major papers, 01/26/06).

The government expects economic growth of 1.4% this year, but anticipates growth of up to 2% once energy prices drop and the economic framework conditions improve. For 2007, when the VAT will rise to 19%, the government expects only one percent growth. (Annual Economic Report. Major papers, 01/26/06)

Germany was the world's fourth-largest arms dealer in 2004, although the export of heavy arms, such as tanks, aircraft and ships, decreased by 15% to 1.1 billion euros. 72% of approved exports went to the EU, NATO, and NATO partner countries. Arms exports made up 0.15% of all German exports for 2004. (2004 Armament Report. Major papers, 01/26/06)

On an annual average in 2005, the index of producer prices for industrial products (domestic sales) for Germany was up 4.6% from the previous year. This is the highest annual average rate of change since 1982 (+5.9%). (Federal Statistical Office, 01/19/06)

The German budget deficit was much smaller last year than the government and the EU Commission had predicted, reaching only 3.5% of the Gross Domestic Product. The EU had expected a 3.9% deficit. (Major papers, 01/13/06)

Germany's economy grew by 0.9% last year. This is a slower expansion than the year before but still meeting economists' expectations of 0.8%. The slight increase was led by exports, which rose 6.2% last year. Imports were up 5%. (Major papers, 01/13/06)

Germans workers retire on average at age 63.1, up from an average retirement age of 62.3 years in 2000. Retirees and pensioners want to avoid cuts in their pensions. A full pension is paid only when they retire at 65, and those who retire early must expect cuts of 0.3% for each month they retire before age 65. (Federal Statistical Office. 01/13/06)

Society

German breweries again sold less beer last year as Germans continue to turn to low-alcohol alternatives. Beer sales fell about 0.5% in 2005 to 10.5 billion liters. However, sales of beer mixed with things such as lemonade and cola jumped 15% to 300 million liters or some 3% of total sales. (Federal Statistical Office. Major papers, 01/31/06)

52% of Germans said foreign policy relations with the United States are "good" or "very good." In May 2004, only 32% and in April 2003, only 17% were of this opinion. 79% consider foreign policy relations with France, and 56% with Russia, to be "good" or "very good". (Ipsos. Financial Times Deutschland, 01/30/06)

85% of Germans want Chancellor Merkel to play a future role in German politics. In comparable polls, neither ex-Chancellor Kohl nor former Chancellor Schröder achieved such a rating. (TNS. Emnid. Der Spiegel, 01/23/06)

75% of Germans do not think that Germany will win the soccer World Cup. 25% of Germans expect a terrorist attack during the games and almost everybody interviewed expects traffic chaos during the matches. (TNS Emnid opinion poll. Tagesspiegel, 01/20/06)

The number of asylum seekers dropped by 19% in 2005 compared to the figures from 2004. 28,914 people applied for asylum, the lowest number since 1983. The majority of asylum seekers came from former Yugoslavia, Turkey and Iraq. (Major papers, 01/09/06)